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2017 Valedictory Address: Haylie Marie Butler '17

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Valedictory Address - Haylie Marie Butler '17



Friday, May 26, 2017

Thank you, President Boroughs, Dr. O'Connell, Bishop McManus, Senior Vice President Vellaccio, Dean Freije, Dean Kramer, Members of the Board of Trustees, Honored Guests, Faculty and Staff, Relatives and Friends, and Fellow Members of the Class of 2017.

I'm a planner. Always have been. And anyone who knows me will probably agree I'm type A...to a fault. As a planner, I used to use this wonderful tool called the checklist.

You write down what you need to get done, you do it, and then you check off the box...indicating you are, well, ready to move on to the next task. It gives you this sense of preparedness — this sense of control.

When we began our time at Holy Cross four years ago, we all had our checklists.

Twin XL bedding. Check.
Sign up for classes. Check.
First-year orientation. Check.
Make friends. Check. Check. and Check.

We thought we were ready. We thought we had it all figured out...

But you know the thing about checklists...they only outline our anticipated end results. They don't include the path, the journey, the challenges, the people you meet who will shape you, the unforeseen experiences that will fundamentally change you. They don't leave room for growth. They don't actually make us ready.

Whether you knew it or not, the day we chose to attend Holy Cross...we made a collective decision as a class—a decision to let Holy Cross change us. We said...okay. Force me to step away from my checklist. Ruin my anticipated plans. Transform me into the person I am supposed to be.

And let me tell you, Holy Cross ruined my checklist. I was supposed to major in Biology, get through my time here, and go straight to medical school after graduation. None of which occurred exactly according to plan.

The route I took was so different than what it was supposed to be. But I am so grateful that it was...

And how did this happen? Because at Holy Cross we are encouraged to do more, give more...ask more of both our education and ourselves.

We all have encountered this experience of "asking more"—this opportunity to apply what we've learned at Holy Cross beyond our campus community. For some of us it may have been through a year abroad in England, a semester in Morocco, a Maymester in Italy, a Spring break immersion to Newport, Virginia, or weekly SPUD volunteering at All Saints Church in Worcester.

Like many of you, I went abroad. And how I decided to throw this into the plan...I still could not tell you. But it turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life. I spent an incredible five months speaking Spanish in a culturally rich and diverse Buenos Aires, Argentina and the next four months studying tropical medicine in the rainforests of Costa Rica. I fell in love with numerous cultures, people, and places. And in my time there, I rediscovered a passion for service that is not based solely on action and reaction but on meaningful human connection.

And while it was unimaginably difficult to say goodbye to these people and places, I longed to return to my home on the Hill. To Worcester snowstorms and Cool Beans coffee. To the stacks of Dinand and Kimball creations. To a place where our education is the utmost priority...where professors will sit with us for hours on end explaining difficult concepts or having a heated intellectual debate because they truly want to see us succeed and be able to think critically about our global world.

It was only through my Holy Cross liberal arts education that I was able to experience the richness of another culture and my profound connection with humanity...and I could not contain my excitement at the thought of returning... I was READY.

Well...imagine my surprise when senior year began and I felt unsettled...uncertain. How could I possibly feel out of place in a campus community that always felt like home?

I walked into our Class Dean's office and tried to explain that something was wrong...looking for an explanation as to why Holy Cross didn't feel the same as when I left at the end of my sophomore year.

Dean Kramer smiled and said to me, "Good. This is how we WANT you to feel. You're a senior. I sure hope you're ready to leave." I laughed a bit as what she said sunk in.

Does this mean that Holy Cross has done its job? Does this mean we are actually equipped with the skills necessary to utilize what

we've learned in the real world?
I was relieved...and almost embarrassed the thought hadn't come to me myself.

I was ready...and not the kind of ready I was at the start of our first year, checklist in hand. Holy Cross had prepared me beyond any checklist...Holy Cross had prepared me for my future.

So, believe me when I say, we are READY to go! I mean, we don't really have much choice now, sitting here in our caps and gowns, having received our diplomas...but I want you to realize that you have been ready.

We are not the same people who rolled up to Wheeler, Hanselman, and Mulledy on August 24, 2013...because we have shared the valuable and impactful gift that is a Holy Cross education— one based in Jesuit ideals and grounded in service. One that encourages us to achieve greatness in a myriad of ways so that we may cross dimensions and interact meaningfully with others.

We are a class of activists, leaders, and scientists. Storytellers, athletes, artists, and philosophical thinkers. We are truly men and women for and with others. Individuals more ready than ever to give ourselves to others in love.

It's simple really. Over the past four years, we willingly allowed Holy Cross to change us so that we could be ready to, well, change the world.

By asking more, by expanding and broadening who you are, in many ways you've made the world a smaller place. You have put yourself in a position to better the life of the other, promote justice, and ignite a concern for humanity in all those you meet along your life journey.

So, friends of the Class of 2017, today we make one final collective decision—a decision to use the invaluable gift we've been given.

Because we did not simply check the box that is Holy Cross, did we...
WE LIVED HOLY CROSS.

We lived out our time here taking risks and trying new things, we lived the mission, and yes, we lived many hours in the stacks of Dinand, science library cubicles, and favorite study spots.
And in living... and surviving... these four years, we became who we were SUPPOSED TO BE.

Sure there are plenty of unknown and unanswered questions about what the future or even next year may hold.
But if you've lost your checklist, don't sweat it!!

We are ready.

Let's go be the change that Holy Cross prepared us to be.

Because I know, and you know, that we most certainly can.

Thank you.